United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Sequoia National Forest Giant Sequoia National Monument | 1839 South Newcomb Street Porterville, CA 93257-9353 (559) 784-1500 (559) 781-6650 TDD

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Interested Parties:

Over the past 2+ years, the Forest engaged the public, our partners, and our cooperators in a new collaborative planning process. This process has been extremely beneficial in involving the public in our planning and environmental documentation. During this endeavor, the Forest initiated a number of steps to integrate science modeling, the use of computer communication techniques, partnerships, and social networking tools into the collaborative planning process.

Collaboration, communication, integration (linking models), and connection (partnering with other entities) are only four parts to develop a compelling and successful management plan. The other part of any planning effort is the integration of science to management.

Since the Forest initiated the collaborative planning process in October 2007, we have completed a number of tasks to link science to management, in particular the development of the Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan. The first was we re-convened some of the members from the Scientific Advisory Board formed in 2001 (and functioned until 2003). This Board provided 29 science advisories to the Forest for review, incorporation, and consideration. Since 2003, when the science advisories were published, the Forest embarked to implement some of the advisories, thus there was a need to review these advisories to determine if they were still relevant. In May 2008, the Forest met with some of the members of the Scientific Advisory Board to review the science advisories and discuss how the science advisories developed back then are still relevant and being implemented now as we develop a new Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan and final environmental impact statement.

In July 2008, the Forest released the science advisories again to the public and provided a 60-day commenting period where the public was able to review the advisories and provide their comments on whether the advisories were still relevant and addressed current science. Through our contract with the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, we used a new commenting portal where over 100 people commented on the science advisories and the proclamation.

Finally, to link science to management, the Forest held a Southern Sierra Science Symposium in September 2008. The Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument worked for over a year with the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, the Forest Service – Pacific Southwest Research Station, and the U.S. Geological Survey to host a Southern Sierra Science Symposium to explain and design a research science agenda for the future. The premise of the symposium was to develop a program of research, resource management and public education, to help mitigate the impacts and adapt to climate change effects on ecosystems of the southern Sierra Nevada. The objectives of the symposium were to analyze and discuss broad scale environmental agents of change affecting the southern Sierra Nevada ecosystems, which include giant sequoia trees. The panel convened to organize and plan the science symposium identified five agents of change: climate change, fire, forest management, pollutants (air), and invasive species. The Southern Sierra Science

Symposium identified the need to continue to link science to management. Some of the presenters mentioned the need to take risks when managing the land, to understand that humans have affected the land and created change on the landscape, and to realize adaptive management will help us to understand the impacts of human management on this global and unique ecosystem.

As the Forest continues to move forward in developing the environmental impact statement, it is time to implement another aspect of linking science to management, the convening of a Science Review Panel. I am convening a Science Review Panel to formalize a process for reviewing how we are integrating current science into the development of the environmental document and subsequent management plan.

In 2003, the research branch of the Forest Service developed procedures for conducting a science review. A science review determines whether an analysis or decision document is consistent with the best available science. The review is accomplished by judging whether scientific information of appropriate content, rigor, and applicability has been considered, evaluated, and synthesized in the documents that underlie and record land management decisions.

I have convened a Science Review Panel consisting of a science administrator and five scientists. Carl Skinner, scientist with the Pacific Southwest Research Station, is the science administrator leading the panel. The five scientists assigned to the panel are: (1) Malcolm North (USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station), research ecologist; (2) Scott Stephens (University of California, Berkeley), fire scientist; (3) Bill Zielinski (USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station), research ecologist; (4) Kevin O'Hara (University of California, Berkeley), silviculturist; and (5) Emilyn Sheffield, social scientist. This panel will review the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and management plan for the Giant Sequoia National Monument before they are released to the public.

The final EIS, management plan, and record of decision will be reviewed by the panel of scientists before they are released to the public. In addition, the panel will prepare a report which will be available to the public.

As we implement the science review process over the next couple of months, I am interested in including the public to get your input and feedback. To get this dialogue initiated and give the public a better understanding of a science review process, I am inviting you to a meeting on Tuesday, November 10, at the Visalia Convention Center (San Joaquin Room A), 303 East Acequia, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. This meeting will introduce you to the scientists and inform you of the process for a science review. Dr. Stephens and Dr. North will be in attendance at the meeting. To facilitate the meeting, the Forest is contracting again with the U. S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. Mr. Frank Dukes, from the University of Virginia, will serve as the meeting facilitator.

The science review of the draft EIS and management plan will be bound by four questions:

1. Is the relevant scientific information considered?
2. Is the scientific information reasonably interpreted and accurately presented?
3. Are the uncertainties associated with the relevant scientific information acknowledged and documented?

4. Are the relevant management consequences identified and documented, including associated risks and uncertainties?

The public is being asked to facilitate an understanding of the above questions, but not to introduce new questions.

The same science review process and questions will be applicable to the final EIS, management plan, and record of decision when those documents are prepared.

I look forward to your participation in this phase of our collaborative planning process for the Giant Sequoia National Monument and thank you for your interest in protecting and managing these unique and beautiful treasures.

Sincerely,

/s/ TINA J. TERRELL
TINA J. TERRELL
Forest Supervisor